

freely free  
the banks, still  
pool, and not like  
t, pra

Boston and elsewhere, that the troops  
ports, with General Pershing's troops  
on board, had been sunk, but much of  
the exiles, with their wives and  
children, were forced to stand for

St. Louis have been here.  
Flat River, Mo., July 16.—It was

workmen are loath to do. The mine  
operators declare that they cannot  
get native laborers to do tasks like

"You insisted on coming down with me," he suggested.  
"I know all about that," I told him. "I haven't complained, have I? If you want me to shut myself up for a week I'll do it; but I should prefer to have some idea of the reason why."

"I don't wish to create mysteries, Mr. Phillips," he said kindly; "but, believe me, there is nothing to be gained in vague discussions."

I knew that settled it as far as he was concerned, so I nodded my head and filled a pipe. At eleven he walked across the room and switched off the light.

"If nothing happens, you can take your turn in four hours from now," he said. "In the meanwhile get to sleep. I will keep the first watch."

I shut my eyes; but there was no rest in me that night. I lay listening to the silence of the old house with a dull speculation. Somewhere far down in the lower floor a great gong-like clock chimed the hour and quarters. I heard them every one from twelve to one, from one to two. Peace had stopped smoking. He sat as silent as a cat at a mousehole.

It must have been some fifteen minutes after two that I heard the faint, faint creak of a board in the corridor outside. I sat up, every nerve strung to a tense alertness. And then there came a sound I knew well, the soft, drawing touch of a hand groping in the darkness as someone felt his way along the panelled walls.

It passed us and was gone. Yet Peace never moved. Could he have fallen asleep? I whispered his name.

"Hush!"

The answer came to me like a gentle sigh.

One minute, two minutes more and the room sprang into sight under the glow of an electric hand-lamp. The inspector rose from his seat and slid through the door, with me upon his heels. The light he carried searched the clustered shadows; but the corridor was empty, nor was there any place where a man might hide.

"You waited so long," I whispered impatiently.

"The man is no fool, Mr. Phillips. Do you imagine that he was not listening and staring like a hunted beast. A noisy board, a stumble, or a flash of light, and we should have wasted a tiring day."

"Nevertheless he has got clear away."

"I think not."

As we crept forward I saw that a strip of the oak flooring along the walls was gray with dust. If it had been in such a neglected state in the afternoon I should surely have noticed it. In some curiosity I stooped to examine the phenomenon.

"Flour," whispered the little man, touching my shoulder.

"Flour?"

"Yes, I sprinkled it myself. Look—there is the first result."

He steadied his light as he spoke, pointing with his other hand. On the powdery surface was the half foot-print of a man.

The flour did not extend more than a couple of feet from the walls, so that it was only here and there that we caught up the trail. We had passed the bedroom on the left—yet the foot-prints still went on; we were at the store-room door, yet they still were visible before us. There was no other egress from the corridor. The tall window at the end was, as I knew, a good twenty feet from the ground. Had this man also vanished off the earth like Silas Ford?

Suddenly the inspector stopped, grasping my arm. The light he held fell upon two footprints set close together. They were at right angles to the passage. Apparently the man had passed into the solid wall!

"Peace, what does this mean?"

"You, sir, sitting peacefully at home, with a good light and an easy conscience, may think I was a timid fool; yet I was afraid—honestly and openly afraid." The little detective heard the news of it in my voice, for

he gave me a reassuring pat upon the back.

"Have you ever heard of a 'priest's hole'?" he whispered. "In the days when Meudon Hall was built, no country house was without its hiding-place. Protestants and priest, Royalists and Republicans, they all used the secret burrow at one time or another."

"How did he get in?"

"That is what we are here to discover; and as I have no wish to destroy Mr. Ford's old oak panels I think our simplest plan will be to wait until he comes back again."

The shadows leapt upon us as Peace extinguished the light he carried. The great window alone was luminous with the faint starlight that showed the tracery of its ancient stonework; for the rest, the darkness hedged us about in impenetrable barriers. Side by side, we stood by the wall in which we knew the secret entrance must exist.

It may have been ten minutes or more when from the distance—somewhere below our feet, or so it seemed to me—there came the faint echo of a closing door. It was only in such cold silence that we could have heard it. The time ticked on. Suddenly, upon the black of the floor, there shone a thin reflection like the slash of a sword—a reflection that grew into a broad gush of light as the sliding panel in the wall, six feet from where we stood, rose to the full opening. There followed another pause, during which I could see Peace draw himself together as if for some unusual exertion.

A shadow darkened the reflection on the floor, and a head came peering out. The light but half displayed the face, but I could see that the teeth were bare and glistening, like those of a man in some deadly expectation. The next moment he stepped across the threshold.

With a spring like the rush of a terrier, Addington Peace was upon him, driving him off his balance with the impact of the blow. One loud scream he gave that went echoing away into the distant corridors. But, before I could reach them, the little detective had him down, though he still kicked viciously until I lent a hand. The click of the handcuffs on his wrists ended the matter.

It was Ford's valet, the man Jackson.

We were not long by ourselves. I heard a quick patter of naked feet from behind us, and Harbord, the secretary, came running up, swinging a heavy stick in his hand. Ransom followed close at his heels. They both stopped at the edge of the patch of light in which we were, staring from us to the gaping hole in the wall.

"What in thunder are you about?" cried the manager.

"Finding a solution to your problem," said the little detective, getting to his feet. "Perhaps, gentlemen, you will be good enough to follow me."

He stepped through the opening in the wall, and lifted the candle which the valet had placed on the floor whilst he was raising the panel from within. By its light I could see the first steps of a flight which led down into darkness.

"We will take Jackson with us," he continued. "Keep an eye on him, Mr. Phillips, if you please."

It was a strange procession that we made. First Peace, with the candle, then Ransom, with the valet following, while I and Harbord brought up the rear. We descended some thirty steps, formed in the thickness of the wall, opened a heavy door, and so found ourselves in a narrow chamber, some twelve feet long by seven broad. Upon a mattress at the further end lay a man, gagged and bound. As the light fell upon his features, Ransom sprang forward, shouting his name: "Silas Ford, by thunder!"

With eager fingers we loosened the gag and cut the ropes that bound his wrists. He sat up, turning his long, thin face from one to the other of us as he stretched the cramp from his limbs.

"Thank you, gentlemen," said he. "Well, Ransom, how are things?"

"Bad sir; but it's not too late."

He nodded his head, passing his hands through his hair with a quick, nervous movement.

"You've caught my clever friend, I see. Kindly go through his pockets, will you? He has something I must ask him to return to me."

We found it in Jackson's pocket-book—a cheque, antedated a week, for five thousand pounds, with a covering letter to the manager of the bank. Ford took the bit of stamped paper, twisted it to and fro in his supple fingers.

"It was smart of you, Jackson," he said, addressing the cowed figure before him. "I give you credit for the idea. To kidnap a man just as he was bringing off a big deal—well, you would have earned the money."

"But how did you get down here?"

He told me that he had discovered an old hiding-place—a 'priest's hole' he called it, and I walked into the trap as the best man may do sometimes. As we got to the bottom of that stairway he slipped a sack over my head, and had me fixed in thirty seconds. He fed me twice a day, standing by to see I didn't halloo. When I paid up he was to have twenty-four hours' start; then he would let you know where I was. I held out awhile, but I gave in tonight. The delay was getting too dangerous. Have you a cigarette, Harbord? Thank you. And who may you be?"

It was to the detective he spoke.

"My name is Peace, Inspector Addington Peace, from Scotland Yard."

"And I owe my rescue to you?"

The little man bowed.

"You will have no reason to regret it. And what did you think had become of me, Inspector?"

"It was the general opinion that you had taken to yourself wings, Mr. Ford."

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It was as we traveled up to town next day that Peace told me his story. I will set it down as briefly as may be.

"I soon came to the conclusion that Ford, whether dead or alive, was inside the grounds of Meudon Hall. If he had bolted, for some reason—by the way, which was perfectly incomprehensible—a man of his ability would not have left a broad trail across the center of his lawn for all to see. There was, moreover, no trace of him that our men could ferret out at any station within reasonable distance. A motor was possible, but there were no marks of its presence next morning in the slush of the roads. That fact I learnt from a curious groom who had aided in the search, and who, with a similar idea upon him, had carefully examined the highway at daybreak.

"When I clambered to the top of the wall I found that the snow upon the coping had been dislodged. I traced the marks, as you saw, for about a dozen yards. Where they ended I, too, dropped to the ground outside. There I made a remarkable discovery. Upon a little drift of snow that lay in the shallow ditch beneath were more footprints. But they were not those of Ford. They were the marks of long and narrow boots, and led into the road, where they were lost in the track of a flock of sheep that had been driven over it the day before.

"I took a careful measurement of those footprints. They might, of course, belong to some private investigator; but they gave me an idea. Could some man have walked across the lawn in Ford's boots, changed them to his own on the top of the wall, and so departed? Was it the desire of someone to let it be supposed that Ford had run away?

"When I examined Ford's private rooms I was even more fortunate. From the bootbox I discovered that the master had three pairs of shooting-boots. There were three pairs in the stand. Some one had made a very serious mistake. Instead of hiding the pair he had used on the

lawn, he had returned them to their place. The trick was becoming evident. But where was Ford? In the house or grounds, dead or alive, but where?

"I was able, through my friend the bootboy, to examine the boots on the night of our arrival. My measurements corresponded with those that Jackson, the valet, wore. Was he acting for himself, or was Harbord, or even Ransom, in the secret? That, too, it was necessary to discover before I showed my hand.

"Your story of Harbord's midnight excursion supplied a clue. The secretary had evidently followed some man who had disappeared mysteriously. Could there be the entrance to a secret chamber in that corridor? That would explain the mystification of Harbord as well as the disappearance of Silas Ford. If so, Harbord was not involved.

"If Ford were held a prisoner he must be fed. His goaler must of necessity remain in the house. But the trap I set in the suggested journey to town was an experiment singularly unsuccessful, for all the three men I desired to test refused. However, if I were right about the secret chamber I could checkmate the blackmailer by keeping a watch on him from your room, which commanded the line of communications. But Jackson was clever enough to leave his victimhood to the night-time. I scattered the flour to try the result of that ancient trick. It was successful. That is all. Do you follow me?"

"Yes," said I; "but how did Jackson come to know the secret hiding-place?"

"He has long been a servant of the house. You had better ask his old master."

#### Queered Himself.

"Why are you pouting, Betty?"

"Jack said I was beautiful, and I told him he must be near-sighted."

"What did he say?"

"Why, the horrid thing said perhaps he was."

#### An Unjust Accusation.

"Sarah," said a lady to her maid, "I'm vexed at your neglect and carelessness. Just look at all that dust on the piano! It's six weeks old at the very least." Sarah suddenly became very dignified. "Then it's no fault of mine. You know very well, ma'am, that I've been with you only four weeks."

#### A Good Wife.

"So poor Mandy is gone?"  
"Yes, yes, ma'am."  
"She was a good wife to you, Sam."  
"Yes, indeed she was. I speak I'd been turned out of house and home years ago if she hadn't worked all the time to keep the rent paid up."

#### Her Attraction.

"She's the daughter of a bank president."  
"No wonder she draws so much interest."

#### Expensive Virtue.

A Southern judge, who had a fine lot of hogs, one day met a colored man notorious for stealing and said to him: "Uncle Jack, I'll tell you what I'll do. You pick out two of those hogs you like the best, and I'll give them to you, provided you won't steal any of the others." The negro pondered awhile and finally said: "Jedge, you've always been a good neighbor, an' I likes yuh, an' I wants to do right by yuh, and so accepts de offer yuh makes, but I wants yuh to know I'll lose meat by it."—Puck.

#### He Died for the Union.—SERGEANT—

"Ey there! Where are you going?"  
THE ABSENT-MINDED BEGGAR (who had climbed out of the trench)—"Ol Jiminy! When that bloomin' shell w'stled over 'ead H! hot it was twelve o'clock o'clock."—Nebraska Awgwan.